



Working With Interpreters



When working with individuals who have limited English proficiency and/or prefer communicating in a different language, it's important to have trained and qualified interpreters on hand to help you communicate.

Selecting an Interpreter

When selecting an interpreter:

- ☐ Use neutral, trained professionals for interpretation from accredited agencies, preferably in person, if possible.
- ☐ Screen interpreters for conflicts of interest.
- ☐ Do not use family members, others accompanying the individual, or anyone who has a relationship with the individual.
- ☐ Inform individuals that they can refuse a particular interpreter if they are not comfortable speaking in front of them.
- ☐ Individuals should be told they can refuse a particular interpreter if they are not comfortable speaking in front of them. If possible, ask for the individual's preferences for an interpreter (e.g., gender or age of interpreter), and adjust as needed.

Preparing the Interpreter

Prepare the interpreter by letting them know that the details they hear from the individual may feel overwhelming or traumatic. Hold a pre-interview meeting with the interpreter and explain that they are expected to:

- ☐ Maintain confidentiality.
- ☐ Apply a trauma-informed approach.
- ☐ Use person-centered language to avoid potential harm.
- ☐ Monitor for signs of stress in the individual and slow down, as needed.
- ☐ Translate verbatim all questions and answers, even if the individual uses slang or swear words.
- ☐ Maintain neutral body language, facial expressions, and tone, even when hearing distressing information

Additional Resources

For more resources related to finding and working with an interpreter or language support, see below.

- [National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators \(NAJIT\) Find an Interpreter or Translator Directory](#)
- [Interpretation Technical Assistance and Resource Center \(ITARC\) and Language Access Resources](#)
- [Limited English Proficiency \(LEP\) Language Identification Flashcards](#)
- [Interpreters \(Human Trafficking Task Force e-Guide\)](#)
- [Working with Interpreters: A Checklist to Evaluate Qualifications \(Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons\)](#)
- [Working with Interpreters \(Human Trafficking Survivor Advocate Toolkit\)](#)